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SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE

# Bureau of Labor Statistics

State of California

## LABOR CONDITIONS IN THE CANNING INDUSTRY

JOHN P. McLAUGHLIN, Commissioner

948 Market Street, San Francisco

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SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

1913



LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

STATE BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS,  
SAN FRANCISCO, March 12, 1913

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith a special report on **lal**  
conditions in the canning industry of the State of California.

Respectfully,

JOHN P. McLAUGHLIN,  
Commissioner

*His Excellency, HIRAM W. JOHNSON,*  
*Governor of California.*

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REPORT OF THE FRUIT AND VEGETABLE  
CROPPERS OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA.

It is not intended to then establishments running perishable  
business. The purpose of thus limiting the scope of the  
protection to the establishments as are specifically  
mentioned is to give effect to the eight hour law for women. The

results developed by our tabulations. Starting with 253 employees during the week ending March 23, 1912, the total number employed in the canneries reporting increased to 13,831, during the week ending August 17, 1912. From thereon the number of employees decreased rapidly until the end of season during the week ending December 3, 1913. The number of women employed rose from 157 to 8,270, the number of men from 253 to 4,519, and the number of children under 16 years from 3 to 1,275. These figures represent the entire State. In the various districts and localities the seasons were shorter and the rise and fall of the number of employees more marked.

Part two contains the results of an investigation of the hours and earnings of women workers in canneries in California, made by the United States Department of Commerce and Labor, and is reprinted from Bulletin 96 of the Bureau of Labor. This investigation is of particular value in that it was made by disinterested persons, and further, that the period of time covered by the investigation was just prior to the eight hour law for women going into effect. In considering the figures and statements in part two, it must be borne in mind that the hours of labor of the women engaged in labeling, stamping and work other than that of canning, are now limited to eight hours, since the fruit or vegetable becomes non-perishable as soon as it is canned and sealed; also that the percentage of children under 16 years is now much lower on account of the rigid enforcement of the child labor law.

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**PART I.**

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TABLE I.

Canning Season 1912, Showing the Dates at Which Actual Canning Operations Began and Ended. (By districts and localities.)

District and locality.	Canning season 1912	
	Began.	Ended.
<i>San Francisco Bay District.</i>		
Benicia .....	June 4	Septemb
Berkeley .....	June 1	Novemb
Emeryville .....	July 19	Septemb
Hayward .....	May 31	Novemb
Lorenzo .....	May 29	Novemb
Oakland—No. 1 .....	May 29	Septemb
Oakland—No. 2 .....	May 11	Octobe
Oakland—No. 3 .....	March 23	Novemb
San Francisco .....	April 1	Novemb
San Leandro .....	June 4	Octobe
<i>Los Angeles District.</i>		
Anaheim .....	September 2	Novemb
Hemet .....	June 26	Octobe
Lankershim .....	July 6	Septemb
Los Angeles—No. 1 .....	August 20	Decemb
Los Angeles—No. 2 .....	July 8	Decemb
Los Angeles—No. 3 .....	June 17	Decemb
Los Angeles—No. 4 .....	July 8	Novemb
Ontario—No. 1 .....	July 3	Decemb
Ontario—No. 2 .....	August 1	Octobe
Pasadena .....	July 10	Octobe
Pomona .....	July 7	Octobe
Santa Ana .....	May 26	Novemb
<i>Santa Clara District.</i>		
Campbell .....	July 6	Novemb
Los Gatos .....	June 8	Septemb
San Jose—No. 1 .....	July 15	Novemb
San Jose—No. 2 .....	June 17	Octobe
San Jose—No. 3 .....	June 1	Novemb
San Jose—No. 4 .....	June 2	Novemb
San Jose—No. 5 .....	June 24	Novemb
Santa Clara .....	April 9	Novemb
Sunnyvale .....	June 4	Novemb
Watsonville .....	May 11	Decemb
<i>Sacramento-Stockton District.</i>		
Andrus Island .....	March 16	June
Isleton .....	March 21	June
Orwood .....	March 22	June
Pittsburg .....	April 8	June
Ryde .....	March 24	June
Sacramento—No. 1 .....	April 2	Octobe
Sacramento—No. 2 .....	April 2	Novemb
Stockton .....	July 24	Octobe
Vorden .....	April 1	June
<i>Fresno District.</i>		
Fresno .....	June 10	Augus
Hanford .....	July 15	Septemb
Modesto .....	July 14	Septemb
Oakdale .....	May 7	Octobe
Selma—No. 1 .....	July 19	Septemb
Selma—No. 2 .....	July 19	Octobe
Turlock .....	June 22	Septemb
Visalia .....	July 18	Septemb
<i>Marysville District.</i>		
Gridley .....	July 24	Septemb
Marysville .....	July 16	Septemb
Yuba City .....	July 13	Septemb
<i>Santa Rosa District.</i>		
Santa Rosa .....	May 30	Novemb
Sebastopol .....	June 4	Novemb
<i>Winters District.</i>		
Suisun .....	May 31	Septemb
Winters .....	June 1	Septemb

## LABOR CONDITIONS IN THE CANNING INDUSTRY.

TABLE No. II. SAN FRANCISCO BAY DISTRICT of adults -  
Ten Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables. (Showing number and sex paid, by weeks.)

[illegible]



**Twelve Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables.** (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

[illegible]









TABLE No. VIII. SANTA ROSA DISTRICT.

**Two Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables.** (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

[illegible]

TABLE No. VII.—MARYSVILLE DISTRICT.

**Three Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables.** (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

[illegible]

TABLE No. VIII. SANTA ROSA DISTRICT.

Two Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables. (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

Week of year.	Date— Week ending	Total number of employees.	Total male.	Total female.	ADULTS (16 years and over).			CHILDREN (under 16 years).			Total wages for week.
					Total.	Male.	Female.	Total.	Male.	Female.	
22d	June 1	160	43	117	160	43	117	4	3	1	\$558 18
23d	June 8	282	78	204	278	75	203	47	13	34	1,528 86
24th	June 15	432	135	297	385	122	263	117	46	71	2,406 98
25th	June 22	654	225	429	537	179	358	104	41	63	4,595 90
26th	June 29	658	225	433	554	184	370	90	31	59	4,510 08
27th	July 6	632	206	426	542	175	367	69	23	46	4,193 67
28th	July 13	459	145	314	390	122	268	30	6	24	2,982 83
29th	July 20	385	121	264	355	115	240	87	31	56	2,902 05
30th	July 27	528	181	347	441	150	291	46	22	24	4,056 49
31st	August 3	478	182	296	432	160	272	64	30	34	4,534 88
32d	August 10	537	209	328	473	179	294	65	35	30	4,691 88
33d	August 17	617	252	365	552	217	335	52	24	28	6,759 76
34th	August 24	584	229	355	532	205	327	25	17	8	5,967 20
35th	August 31	499	200	299	474	183	291	17	12	5	5,900 16
36th	September 7	381	157	224	364	145	219	11	7	4	4,663 17
37th	September 14	357	144	213	346	137	209	7	4	3	4,107 57
38th	September 21	335	140	195	328	136	192	7	4	3	4,180 56
39th	September 28	332	139	193	325	135	190	6	3	3	3,773 16
40th	October 5	309	140	169	303	137	166	7	4	3	4,167 09
41st	October 12	310	135	175	303	131	172	7	4	3	3,554 14
42d	October 19	313	143	170	306	139	167	6	3	3	3,317 20
43d	October 26	291	143	148	285	140	145	6	3	3	3,225 94
44th	November 2	265	134	131	259	131	128	6	3	3	3,239 34
45th	November 9	250	124	126	244	121	123	6	3	3	2,709 30
46th	November 16	174	88	86	168	89	83	6	3	3	2,175 01
47th	November 23	166	82	84	160	79	81	6	3	3	1,764 21
48th	November 30	150	78	72	144	75	69	6	3	3	1,367 92
Total wages for season.											\$97,833 53

## LABOR CONDITIONS IN THE CANNING INDUSTRY.



TABLE No. IX. WINTERS DISTRICT.

Two Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables. (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

[illegible]



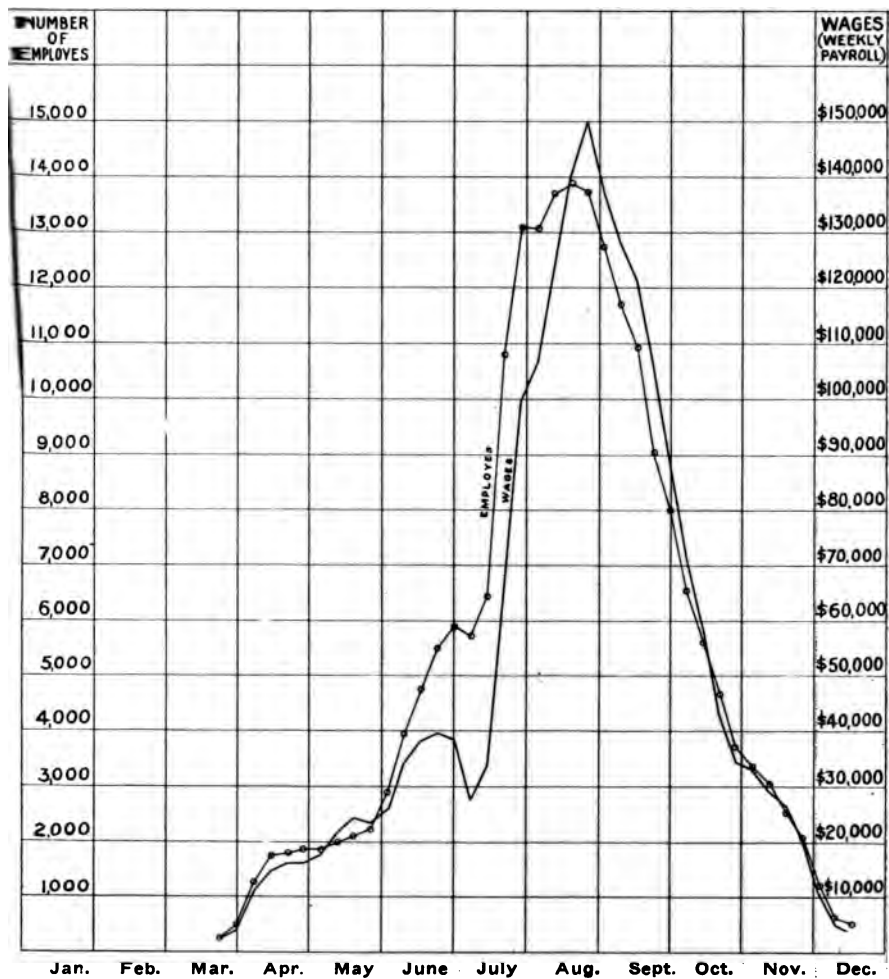


## LABOR CONDITIONS IN THE CANNING INDUSTRY.

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CHART I.

Record of 56 establishments canning perishable fruits and vegetables, showing total number of all persons employed and total wages paid to employees during each week of the actual canning season of the year 1912.



EXPLANATION.—The fall in "wage curve" during the latter part of June and the early part of July marks the transition from the vegetable and early fruit canning to the late fruit canning. During this period the employees of the canneries are being augmented but are only being employed part of the time. The place where the "wage" curve cuts through and passes beyond the "employee" curve marks the point where the number of employees has reached its highest level, and still the hours of employment are rising.

**Twelve Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables.** (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

Week of year.	Date— Week ending	Total number of employees.	Total		ADULTS (18 years and over).			CHILDREN (under 18 years).			Total wages for week.
			Total male.	Total female.	Total.	Male.	Female.	Total.	Male.	Female.	
25th	June 22	128	29	99	110	28	82	18	1	17	\$614 00
26th	June 29	159	50	109	123	40	83	36	10	26	774 05
27th	July 6	500	130	370	400	111	289	100	19	81	1,964 96
28th	July 13	1,486	398	1,088	1,236	324	912	250	74	176	8,884 84
29th	July 20	1,946	515	1,431	1,673	435	1,238	273	80	193	11,627 83
30th	July 27	1,515	402	1,113	1,330	344	986	185	58	127	8,193 35
31st	August 3	1,200	345	855	1,073	293	780	127	52	75	4,016 13
1st	August 10	1,337	385	952	1,163	320	843	174	65	109	4,299 24
32d	August 17	1,800	498	1,307	1,585	410	1,175	215	83	132	11,001 48
33d	August 24	1,935	560	1,375	1,701	464	1,237	234	96	138	14,290 76
34th	August 31	1,865	533	1,332	1,648	450	1,198	217	83	134	13,383 04
35th	September 7	1,820	550	1,270	1,600	421	1,140	220	90	130	14,354 51
36th	September 14	1,561	477	1,084	1,408	460	982	158	56	102	12,498 76
37th	September 21	1,585	465	1,130	1,512	440	1,072	83	25	58	11,776 59
38th	September 28	1,344	409	935	1,289	392	897	55	17	38	10,270 10
39th	October 5	1,226	403	823	1,189	392	797	37	11	26	10,008 60
40th	October 12	1,097	366	731	1,076	360	716	21	6	15	9,503 34
41st	October 19	892	320	572	887	320	567	5	5	5	6,456 02
42d	October 26	870	300	570	866	300	566	4	4	4	6,259 39
43d	November 2	841	303	538	837	303	534	4	4	4	6,816 63
44th	November 9	753	258	495	749	258	491	4	4	4	6,499 63
45th	November 16	721	240	461	717	240	457	4	4	4	6,485 60
46th	November 23	711	264	447	706	264	442	5	5	5	6,043 73
47th	November 30	665	248	417	662	248	414	3	3	3	4,994 45
48th	December 7	473	188	285	470	188	282	3	3	3	3,886 48
49th	December 14	386	171	215	383	171	212	3	3	3	3,126 89
50th											\$198,026 40
Total wages for season.											

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## PART II.

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## CALIFORNIA CANNERIES.

(Reprinted from Bulletin 96, Bureau of Labor.)

### LENGTH OF CANNING SEASON.

This report on the canning industry in California is based upon information furnished by employers in nine establishments employing 3,517 women, and upon data secured individually from 604 employees interviewed in such establishments.

It will be noticed that the number of cannery employees interviewed was considerably larger than the number in any of the other industries. This was considered important because of the extreme irregularity of the work and the very considerable difference in conditions found in the various canneries. In the other industries the smaller numbers seem quite adequate, because of the much greater steadiness of the work and the close similarity in conditions in the several establishments.

A definite idea of the length and variation of the canning season in California, as well as the periods in which the greatest stress is likely to occur, can be obtained from the following diagram issued by one of the largest canning companies in California. The information is confined, of course, to the varieties of fruits and vegetables named in the diagram.





**SPECIAL REPORT OF BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS.**

TABLE No. VII.—MARYSVILLE DISTRICT.

**Three Establishments. Canning Perishable Fruits and Vegetables.** (Showing number and sex of adults and children employed, and wages paid, by weeks.)

[illegible]





The following table summarizes the reports of the individual women employed and presents for the workers in city and country canneries the number reporting, the number of weeks employed, and the average hours and earnings per week.

AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS AND EARNINGS OF WOMEN WORKERS DURING  
THE YEAR ENDING APRIL 30, 1911, IN 9 CANNERIES IN AND NEAR  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

Location.	Reporting.	Average weeks employed.	Average hours per week.	Average earnings per week.
City -----	342	18.4	<sup>1</sup> 57.8	<sup>1</sup> \$7.21
Country -----	262	14.2	<sup>2</sup> 63.8	<sup>2</sup> \$7.92
Totals -----	604	16.6	<sup>3</sup> 60.4	<sup>3</sup> \$7.52

<sup>1</sup> Not including 3 forewomen and 11 workers whose hours and earnings were not reported separately.

<sup>2</sup> Not including 1 forewoman and 13 workers whose hours and earnings were not reported separately.

<sup>3</sup> Not including 4 forewomen and 24 workers whose hours and earnings were not reported separately.

While the duration of employment reported by the cannery workers (city and country) scheduled in California is approximately 2 weeks less than for the cannery workers interviewed in Maryland, and the extremes in maximum weeks are less violent, as is shown by the tabulations at the end of this report, the average working hours per week are much higher, 57.8 and 63.8 in the city and country canneries, respectively, against 45.7 to 50.5 and 48 to 50 in the Maryland canneries. The individual tabulations also show many more weeks of 72 hours or over. Comparison of the two sets of tabulations shows that over one half of the California cannery workers reported such maximum weeks, while less than one fifth of the women interviewed in the Maryland canneries reported 72 hours or more. It should be remembered that 72 hours or over a week in California does not necessarily mean an average of 6 twelve-or-more-hour days, as Sunday work is not illegal in that State.

This freedom from legal restraint in the matter of a 7-day week is largely responsible for the impressive list of maximum weeks, ranging from 72 to 98 hours, to be found in the individual tabulations for California. As the California canners contend that the long-hour drives are absolutely necessary because of the high perishability of the fruit, it is extremely interesting to note that a number of those reporting exceedingly long hours both in the average and maximum weeks are labelers and stampers, who have to do with the product after it is canned, hermetically sealed, and cooked.

The large proportion of the whole force working these long weeks would indicate a shortage of labor, as ordinarily only a small percentage of workers are willing to endure the strain of 80 hours and over even for the added earnings, particularly if there is enough work to maintain a good weekly average. The methods of keeping the force at work

for the long drives in the country canneries did not differ materially from the methods adopted in the city canneries and described later.

Referring to the preceding table and comparing the average hours in the 4 country canneries visited with the average working time reported by city workers, it appears that, while the country workers have 4 weeks less employment, they have 6 hours more per week for the season of 14 weeks than their fellow workers in the city plants. This means that the women in the country canneries put in really over 15 weeks of 57.8 hours, which is the average working time each week of the city employees scheduled. As the piece-rate system prevails almost uniformly in the canning as well as in the preparing departments, this should mean a considerable difference in earnings in favor of the women in the country canneries.

#### LONG HOURS AND HIGH-PRESSURE METHODS.

The frequency of the excessively long week raises a question as to how women can be kept at work for such an unusually long time, for it would seem that the additional earnings would not be sufficient inducement, particularly when the hours are so excessive as to jeopardize the worker's ability to maintain a fair average of productive activity throughout the season.

It should be borne in mind that the irregularity of the working day is not a matter of caprice. This is said with no intention of implying that the extremes recorded in maximum working days and weeks are or are not unavoidable but only to call attention to the fact that the successful management of a canning industry involves the solution of some difficult problems. The materials used in a cannery are perishable and must be cared for within a given time. Frequently the "given time" is altogether inadequate to the quantity of goods to be handled, and the result is a working force increased to the capacity of the factory or to the exhaustion of the labor supply and working to the limit of endurance.

The prevailing method of keeping the force at work during the long drives is to give preference in position and material to those who have shown a willingness to stand by until the fruit is cared for; to threaten loss of work to those who refuse to work the long hours, though the scarcity of labor often renders this threat quite futile. Frequently the last work of the afternoon will not be punched or credited on the pay check until the employee has returned or stayed through the evening work. In a number of cases girls reported, and in two instances managers admitted, that the force had been locked in until the allotted work was done. Such methods were not infrequently accompanied by a firm's refusal to allow any time off for supper, probably, not so much because of the loss of the half hour's time as because of the worker's unwillingness to return when once out of the establishment. In some instances the firm either served a lunch or permitted the workers to send for something to eat. In such cases some of the workers took a few minutes off, the cannery as a whole being in active operation continuously from the noon hour until 9 and 10 o'clock; sometimes until

midnight, and in one establishment visited until 2 o'clock in the morning. The last case was emphatically exceptional however, in the field covered by this investigation, as the tabulations at the end of this article will show. From 6 and 7 in the morning until 9 and 10 at night with a half hour at noon for lunch and no time off for supper, making from 12 to 15 hours a day, was a frequent occurrence, as is equally evident from both the "maximum week" and the "average weekly hours" column in these tabulations. The long-hour drive, however, may be followed by a day or days of but a few hours' work, or of no work at all. The underlying causes of this violent irregularity in working hours are explained in the forthcoming report of the Immigration Commission. In the chapter dealing with "Immigrant Labor in California Fruit and Vegetable Canneries," the report says:

The work in the canneries is irregular and requires a larger number of employees at some times than at others. With the change of crops, the work varies in intensity; the crop of one fruit may be unusually good while that of another is poor. Late or early crops may crowd the cannery or make it short of materials for operation, and transportation conditions may involve variations in the amount of work to be done. Moreover, changes in the prices of "green fruit" may increase or diminish the amount shipped in that form and cause a variation in the amount supplied to the cannery. \* \* \* Sometimes employees are worked overtime for several days in succession and then laid off for a day or so. \* \* \* When there is much work to be done, Sunday work is required.

While the whole section above referred to has to do with the question of immigrant labor, the paragraph quoted applies particularly to the women employees, who, according to the same report, constitute from three fifths to three fourths of the entire force of cannery employees.

Although the actual earnings reported in the California city canneries visited were 71 cents a week lower than those reported by the country workers interviewed, the relative earnings of the country workers were lower because they had to work an average of 63.8 hours to earn 7.92 a week, whereas the women employed in the city canneries worked an average of 57.8 hours and earned 7.21. In other words, the earning power was a fraction of a cent lower per hour in the country than in the city canneries.

#### LABOR SUPPLY OF THE COUNTRY CANNERIES.

What then are the inducements offered to secure an adequate labor supply for the country canneries? It should be borne in mind that the fluctuation of working hours in the country, while not so violent as in the city plants visited, was still sharp enough to render an earning of \$3 in one day possible because of the uneven run of fruit. This possible \$3 the prospective employees are not allowed to forget. It is constantly held up not as a possibility but as a probability by the employer and his labor agent.

In reply to a question as to the employer's assurance that there would be enough labor available to the country canner to enable him to care for the fruit and vegetables in the required time, one manager of a large California cannery said: "A firm can take no chances on its labor supply. Before a plant is ever established in a country district a careful canvass of the labor situation is made." The men who later act as foremen are the principal agents in such a campaign. They ascertain the available number of helpers in the immediate district, the number obtainable from nearby towns, and they get, and keep, in touch with the "movers" or "campers" who leave the cities in the canning seasons for the work in various country canneries. The work of the foremen is effectively supplemented by want advertisements inserted in the small town papers and in the big city dailies. During the season in which this investigation was in progress the calls for help from country canneries were markedly noticeable and not a little alluring, particularly as the peach and pear season advanced. One firm sent out a wagon with large side signs reading, "Light and pleasant work with big pay." The sign on the rear of the wagon gave the name and address of the cannery. At the same time the city dailies were running urgent advertisements. The following were taken at random:

**WOMEN AND GIRLS.**--Do you want to spend two months in the country and earn good wages, with steady work in a fruit cannery? Tents furnished. Working now.

**WANTED.**--Women and girls for cannery work in country; commencing immediately and steady until November 1; no experience necessary; good wages. Cottages and tents furnished. Call at once.

A number of women and girls to register for work at Napa; season will begin about August 1; free tents; a profitable summer outing.

We want women and girls immediately for fruit cannery work; no experience necessary to earn big wages; tents furnished; tell your friends and go at once.

In each of the above advertisements the big wages and the offer of "free tents" or "free cottages" occur.

#### HOUSING FACILITIES.

The housing question during the canning season is a problem, of course, and when labor is scarce the free tents and cabins are held out as an inducement. In many instances a charge of \$2 a month is made for a cabin, the rental being rebated if the workers stay throughout the season. Some employers require that each cottage shall house at least two regular workers; others stipulate that every occupant "old enough" shall work in the cannery. In none of the small town canneries visited in California did the firms restrict the occupation of the cottages to women as was done in one city cannery, which had a very few cabins for its detached and homeless workers. In the country districts the cabins are occupied largely by the Portuguese and Italians, some of whom own small ranches at considerable distance from the canneries. These workers occupy the cabins during the fruit season only, while a few of those having no interests elsewhere live in them all the year round.

A detailed consideration of the housing conditions as developed by

this tent, cabin, and shack system would have no place here except for the fact that the housing is considered by both employer and employee as a factor in compensation, and may fairly be regarded as having an important bearing upon the earnings of country cannery workers. On this basis the quality of the housing is a proper subject for discussion.

The big, unpartitioned shed, housing dozens of families in the manner described in connection with some of the Maryland canneries, was not found in any of the California canneries visited. The company cabins or tents were all constructed either for one family or for four women. There was, of course, a wide range in the degree of healthfulness, comfort, and sanitation that characterized various groups of tents and cabins. Some of them were entirely too close to the cannery, getting the odors of decaying refuse, and when the drainage and management of the camp itself were inadequate offensive odors assailed the workers day and night. Others showed intelligent care and effective protection on the part of the management, with a consequent degree of comfort and even attractiveness about the workers' quarters that should be a real inducement "to go into the country canneries for a summer's outing."

This free housing, while a substantial perquisite, is practically the only inducement which the country canner has to offer, except for the more or less agreeable change involved in the trip to the country. It was evident, however, that the managers of country canneries did not depend to so great an extent upon help from the large cities as did the country canners of Maryland. The surrounding country, dotted with small ranches, was counted on for much of the labor and for this the country canneries have no serious competition from the city employers. With this resident supply of labor, glad to increase the family income by work in the nearby canneries, the question is not so serious as if the country plants visited were wholly or principally dependent upon help attracted from the city. It should not be inferred that migratory labor is inconsequential. The "campers" or "movers," who make a business of following up the different varieties of fruits and vegetables as they ripen, throughout the whole deciduous fruit belt of California, are factors in the labor supply of varying degrees of importance. But the very fact that they are not settled in the cities and have formed a migratory habit makes them less difficult to attract, and the availability of a resident supply of labor gives the cannery employer a good bargaining leverage.

#### LACK OF RECORDS AND FREEDOM FROM REGULATION OF THE CANNING INDUSTRY.

The entire absence of working-time records, and almost uniform lack of records of any description for the pieceworkers, in either the California or the Maryland canneries visited is a feature of this investigation which calls for consideration. Without such records it is impossible for employers to make any progress in distributing the strain of



excess work over the whole force, for there is nothing but the memory or personal interest of the foremen to mark the working time of each employee. Without such records, too, there would be no effective way of preventing the employees of a day shift in one cannery from working on the night shift in another. It must be borne in mind that to the overwhelming majority of these workers extra time carries but a single meaning—extra money.

Their eagerness for this extra money finds at least some explanation in the level of earnings shown in the foregoing tables. The deeper and broader influence of long hours on a half-grown girl or a married woman has no place in their calculations. To get enough to feed, to house, and to clothe themselves is the problem that absorbs their entire attention. The women have neither the time nor the facilities to figure out the cumulative losses due to excessive hours of labor. But it is singular that employers who direct other phases of their business along lines indicated by carefully kept accounts should attempt to regulate the supply of so large a part of their labor without the help of adequate records. The bureau's agents were frequently told by both employees and employers that after a certain point the earning power waned as the working hours lengthened, and that "after a drive the work lagged." This is a loss for employer as well as employee, with the difference that to the employer a distribution of overtime strain would mean an immediate gain; to the employee accustomed to the increased earnings of excessive overtime work there would be an apparent loss of money in such distribution which it might take her some time to see was offset by the fact that her earning power during normal hours would be better sustained or increased.

Apropos of the lack of either legal or voluntary regulations in the industry, the following paragraph from the volume<sup>1</sup> edited by a student of this subject, is pertinent:

The exemption from regulation is also responsible for corresponding deficiencies in the technical administration of the industry (fruit and vegetable canning). The very fact that employers are legally free to make their operatives work without limit, and to crowd any number of them into one room, makes them disinclined to put thought and capital into improving arrangements. The better disposed of them admit that the present system tempts them to buy carelessly; to make no adequate use of the telegraph and telephone in regulating deliveries; to dispense with cold storage, so that it is a common custom to keep the fruit in workrooms exposed to heat, steam, and the deteriorating influence of congregated humanity.

A few firms stand out as preferring the upward way, scientifically organizing their supplies, providing cold storage, working their operatives only normal hours, and seeing to it that the work places are clean and healthful.

<sup>1</sup>"The Case for the Factory Acts," Mrs. Sidney Webb, p. 52.

The extent to which this lack of records is carried can not be too much emphasized. Children and adults work side by side, delivering their buckets, baskets, or trays of prepared product and receiving therefor a brass check or cash, as the case may be. The brass check or cash in most cases is all the record the employer has for the work of an employee of whatever age.

For the pieceworkers in the canneries visited, the data for hours and earnings, developed in the course of this investigation by the patient probing of the Bureau's agents in the manner described in the introduction to this report, are at present writing, therefore, more complete records than the cannery themselves possess concerning the working time of their own employees.

#### DESCRIPTION OF A TYPICAL CALIFORNIA CANNERY.

The typical California cannery, whether in the city or country district, is conducted with distinct reference to two main departments, viz, that in which the fruits and vegetables are prepared, canned, and cooked—the cannery proper—and that in which the goods are stored and, just before shipment, labeled. This latter division, which is known as the warehouse, is sometimes a separate building, varying in height from one to four stories, and sometimes only a room in the cannery proper. In either case it is usually large, airy, and well lighted.

The cannery proper is a large one-story brick or wood structure. The brick canneries visited were flat roofed, and dependent for light and air upon doors and windows. Many of the wooden structures visited were windowless, but were supplied with skylights. In the brick structures the cooking room, where only men are employed, was usually walled off, the steam passing out through the doors and windows. In the wooden canneries the cooking room was not walled off, but in most cases the part of the cannery where the women were at work was not seriously affected because the steam passed directly through the open skylights. The windowless construction is an economy of floor space, as materials can be stacked around the walls without interfering with light or ventilation. In one or two cases, however, either the skylights were not properly managed or the cooking equipment was not sufficiently near the doors, for the whole plant was suffused with steam, making the air depressingly humid and superheated. Also, there were a few structures which were well supplied with ventilating facilities but clogged with foul air because no use was made of such facilities. In each of these cases, of course, the health and efficiency of the workers were subjected to an entirely avoidable handicap. In some of the country canneries the cooking room was really an open court, leaving the rest of the plant completely free from the heat and steam.

Entering the cannery by the door through which the fresh fruit is brought one first encounters a number of long tables equipped with one or two to four shelves running along the top. On these tables the fruit is prepared by preparers—more commonly known as “cutters.” California practically all of the cutters are women. Very frequently

women, and, in some instances, children, carry the large boxes of fruit, weighing 40 pounds and over, from the general supply place to the preparing tables. This is important not only because of the number of immature girls in the canneries but because of the presence of so many married women. Frequently these women are at work while pregnant, often working dangerously near to the day of confinement. In other canneries fruit was brought to the preparing tables by men. This method relieved the women of the physical strain, but in some cases caused them anxiety because of an alleged partiality on the part of the men in distributing the fruit or vegetables. The space between the cutting tables permits the workers to be seated while at work, but the necessity of reaching the four shelves makes work in this position difficult. Few canneries employ a person to keep the floor clean about the preparing tables, so the fallen, mashed, and spoiling fruits and vegetables render the surroundings distinctly unpleasant. As this investigation was completed before the beginning of the tomato season, it is not possible to say how unpleasant conditions become through this lack of care.

Next to the preparing tables are those for the canners, who are also women. Their position and proximity to one another depend upon the presence or absence of an automatic grader. This device is a long piece of iron pierced its entire length with holes for the different grades of fruit. When the grader is used it is necessary for the canning tables to be close together because fruit is borne from the grader along moving belts on these tables. As each table has a trough and belt on either side, there is at most a narrow passage between the two rows of workers. As a rule eight girls work on either side of the table. The trough is partitioned so that each girl has her own bin. As the fruit comes from the grader on the rolling belts, gates at each place push a portion of it into the bin; where these gates are not stationary, the fruit is very unequally distributed, often because workers at the upper tables will draw the gates almost across the belt, thus taking most of the fruit and leaving a wholly inadequate supply for those at the lower tables. Each table has two upper shelves, making necessary a good deal of reaching and rendering a sitting position while at work unprofitable under any circumstances. Where the grader is used the small space between the tables makes sitting impossible.

The work of the canners consists in washing and sorting the fruit, eliminating such as is imperfect and canning the rest. The workers' hands are constantly in cold water. "Sore hands" was a frequent complaint among the canners and was charged to the cold water, while among the cutters both the cold water and the hardness of the green fruit was held responsible for damage to hands. The floor about the canning tables was always found in a damp condition and in some instances water stood in easily measurable depth. The canners, however, in the California establishments visited, were standing upon raised slats, so that they were fairly protected from an actual wetting. The filled cans are taken from the canning tables on trucks to the "shipper."

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After the air is exhausted from the cans by the use of steam they are capped and cooked.

With the exception of the grader, no machinery is placed near the women workers. The canners, however, are frequently near enough to the cooking equipment to get the full benefit of the noise. While there is little or no strain occasioned by machine work, the pieceworkers soon strike a peculiar swaying motion, resembling that by which machine workers adapt themselves to the demands of their machines, and which seems to lend itself to speed and facility of production. Two cannery officials—each in a different cannery—volunteered the opinion that cannery work was so much of a strain that workers were unfit to do other work when the cannery season was over. It was noticeable, however, that in spite of the unusual length of the working day during the "drives," there was little or no complaint from the workers, because, with the piece-rate system, which prevailed almost uniformly, long hours meant to them only increased pay.

#### CHARACTER OF LABOR FORCE IN CALIFORNIA CANNERIES.

For the 604 women employed in California canneries who furnished individual data for this investigation, information was secured concerning age, race, and conjugal condition, as well as concerning hours, earnings, and duration of work, and a study of these facts discloses some marked differences between the character of the labor force employed in the canneries and that of the labor force in the other industries studied.

The following table shows the number and per cent of women who were single, married, or widowed tabulated according to race or nationality. An examination of the table shows that nearly 90 per cent of the force were of foreign birth and only about 10 per cent native born. The married women constituted 47.85 per cent, the widowed 11.26 per cent, and the single 40.89 per cent. These percentages are even more striking when it is noticed that 13.90 per cent were under 16 years of age. The differences in proportions of married and widowed between cannery employees and employees in the other industries are not nearly so great as in Maryland.

The reasons assigned for the large proportion of married women found in the Maryland canneries (pp. 375 and 376) apply with equal force here. The irregularity of the working hours, the intermittent nature of the industry, and the comparatively low degree of industrial skill required makes it easier for unskilled workers to secure employment in canneries than in the other industries.

RACE AND CONJUGAL CONDITION OF WAGE-EARNING WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA CANNERIES.

Race or nationality.	Single.		Married.		Widowed.		Total.
	Num-ber.	Per-cent.	Num-ber.	Per-cent.	Num-ber.	Per-cent.	Num-ber.
Italian .....	113	39.37	146	50.87	28	9.67	287
Portuguese .....	57	40.71	69	49.29	14	10.00	140
American .....	38	59.38	<sup>2</sup> 17	26.56	9	14.06	64
Other nationalities .....	38	34.55	55	50.00	17	15.45	110
Not reported .....	1	33.33	2	66.67			3
Totals .....	247	40.89	289	47.85	68	11.26	604

<sup>1</sup> Per cent based on total number reporting nationality.

<sup>2</sup> Includes 1 American colored employee.

Among the California workers, as was noted in the case of the women employed in the Maryland factories, the women employed in the canneries are notably older than those in the other industries. Over 20 per cent of those reporting in the California canneries were 45 years of age and over, while the highest per cent found in the other industries was 11.19 in shirt, overall, etc., factories. The number and per cent of women employed in canneries who were in each specified age group are shown in the following table:

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF WOMEN EMPLOYED IN CALIFORNIA CANNERIES, BY AGE GROUPS.

Age groups.	Number.	Per-cent.
Under 16 years of age .....	84	
16 to 44 years .....	395	
45 years and over .....	125	
Totals .....	604	

The large employment of women 45 years of age and over explained in part the unusually large percentage of the married and widowed women employed in canneries.

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